Forecast by USA for import of wheat by India

527. SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in July 2005, Food and Agricultural Services of U.S. Department of Agriculture forecasted that India will import one Million tonne of wheat;

(b) if so, the basis of this forecast;

(c) whether Government have taken any cognigence of the forecast;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Articles carrying the USDA forecast that India is expected to import one million tonnes (estimated) of wheat did feature in some of the reports/publications on commodities trade. This forecast was done on the basis of lower carrying stock and strong consumption leading to tight supply position and strengthening of domestic prices. The rising consumption has been attributed to high population growth and changes in the dietary habits, with increasing urbanization and higher consumer income.

(c) to (e) The Government makes its own independent assessment, based on estimations of production, procurement and off take, trade feedback and inputs from other related agencies such as the above-referred forecast. The recent decision to import bulk wheat on Government account has primarily been resorted to because of the shortfall in procurement of wheat in the last procurement season and the need to keep the stocks as per the prescribed buffer norms.

Pending rail projects

528. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of rail projects are still pending;